GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

STARRED QUESTION NO:55
ANSWERED ON:20.07.2016
Indian Fishermen in Foreign Jails
Biju Shri Parayamparanbil Kuttappan;M. Smt. Vasanthi

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the number of Indian fishermen apprehended/imprisoned and their equipments and fishing boats seized by forces by various countries, country-wise during the last three years;

(b) the time since when they have been imprisoned and the action taken to get them released along with fishing boats/trawlers/equipment and the success achieved in this regard;

(c) whether any meeting has been fixed with the authorities of other countries for amicable settlement of the issues; and

(d) if so, the details thereof and the other measures taken by the Government to help and safeguard the interest of these imprisoned fishermen?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
(SHRIMATI SUSHMA SWARAJ)

(a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO. 55 REGARDING "INDIAN FISHERMEN IN FOREIGN JAILS" FOR ANSWER ON 20.07.2016

(a) & (b) As per information available with the Ministry, the country-wise details of fishermen apprehended/imprisoned and the boats seized by the forces of neighbouring countries, along with details of their release are given in the Annexure.

(c) & (d) The Government attaches the highest priority to the safety, security and welfare of Indian fishermen. Our Missions and Posts regularly seek consular access to Indian fishermen detained in foreign countries, ensure their welfare and also pursue their early release and repatriation, along with their boats. Given the humanitarian and livelihood dimensions of this issue, the Government has put in place several bilateral mechanisms to ensure cooperation and understanding between India and the countries concerned, to promote the safety and security of Indian fishermen.

In case of Pakistan, we have a bilateral Agreement on Consular Access, signed in May 2008. The India-Pakistan Joint Judicial Committee, consisting of retired judges of superior judiciary from the two countries, visit jails in both countries, to ensure humane treatment and expeditious release of prisoners, including fishermen on both sides, who have completed their prison terms.

In the case of Sri Lanka, our Mission works closely with the Sri Lankan Ministry of Defence, the Attorney General's Office and the law enforcement agencies concerned, to secure the release and repatriation of our fishermen. There is a Joint Working Group on Fisheries and a Joint Committee on Fisheries, which take up fishermen's issues for resolution on basis of the bilateral Understanding on Practical Arrangements of October 2008. In addition, talks are held from time to time between Fishermen's Associations in India and Sri Lanka.

In the case of Bangladesh, on receipt of information of the arrest of Indian fishermen, Mission contacts the concerned District Magistrates in India to ascertain their Indian nationality and thereafter pursue with the Bangladesh authorities for their release. For this, Mission seeks consular access from Ministry of Foreign Affairs and contacts local NGOs for their welfare during their imprisonment in Bangladesh.